

PROJECT CENSORED

NEWS THAT DIDN'T MAKE THE NEWS

The Project Censored voting panel has released its list of the 25 most significant stories that should have hit the headlines in a major way last year, but didn't.

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No. 1: SECRET INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENT UNDERMINES THE SOVEREIGNTY OF NATIONS

Some developments in the course of history have such potential to impact nations and humans that it would be irresponsible to ignore them. Yet few mainstream news organisations have reported on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), which would set in place a vast series of protections for foreign investment. According to reports in the alternative press, the MAI would threaten national sovereignty by giving corporations near-equal rights to nations.

The MAI would thrust the world economy much closer to a system where international corporate capital would hold free rein over the democratic values and socio-economic needs of people. The MAI would also have devastating effects on a nation's legal, environmental and cultural sovereignty. It would force countries to relax or nullify human, environmental and labour protection to attract investment and trade. Necessary measures such as food subsidies, control of land speculation, agrarian reform and health and environmental standards can be challenged as "illegal" under the MAI. This same illegality is extended to community control of forests, local bans on use of pesticides, clean air standards, limits on mineral, gas and oil extraction, and bans on toxic dumping. (See "MAIgalomania!", *NEXUS* 5/03, 5/04, April-May and June-July 1998.)

No. 2: CHEMICAL CORPORATIONS PROFIT FROM BREAST CANCER

In one of the more cynical examples of corporate profit-making ingenuity, leaders in cancer treatment and information are the same chemical companies that also produce carcinogenic products.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month, initiated in 1985 by the chemical conglomerate Imperial Chemical Industries (currently called Zeneca Pharmaceuticals), reveals an uncomfortably close connection between the chemical industry and the cancer research establishment. As the controlling sponsor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month (BCAM), Zeneca is able to approve—or veto—any promotional or informational materials, posters, advertisements, etc. that BCAM uses. The focus is strictly limited to information regarding early detection and treatment, with an avoidance of the topic of prevention. Critics have begun to question why. With revenues of US\$14 billion, Zeneca is among the world's largest manufacturers of pesticides, plastics and pharmaceuticals.

Zeneca was instrumental in convincing the FDA to approve tamoxifen as a "prevention" measure to reduce the incidence of breast cancer in healthy women at risk. However, the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer considers tamoxifen a "probable human carcinogen".

(See "Tamoxifen: A Major Medical Mistake?", *NEXUS* 5/04, June-July 1998.)

No. 3: MONSANTO CONSOLIDATES ITS GENETICALLY MODIFIED SEEDS

Over the 12,000 years that humans have been farming, a rich tradition of seed-saving has developed. Men and women choose seeds from the plants that are best adapted to their own locale and trade them within the community, enhancing crop diversity and success rates. All this may change in the next four to five years.

Monsanto Corporation has been working to consolidate the world seed market, and is now poised to introduce new genetically engineered seeds that will produce only infertile seeds at the end of the farming cycle. Farmers will no longer be able to save seeds from year to year, and will be forced to purchase new seeds from Monsanto each year.

For the first time in history, research is being done for the benefit of corporations, sometimes in direct opposition to farmers' interests. It is noteworthy that the USDA stands to earn five per cent royalties of net sales if this technology is commercialised. Historically the USDA has received government money for research aimed at benefiting farmers, but recently the USDA has been turning more often to private companies for funding.

Terminator plants, if introduced on a wide scale, will effectively constrict worldwide crop diversity by preventing farmers from engaging in the seed selection and cross breeding practices that for thousands of years have given them the ability to adapt crops to local conditions.

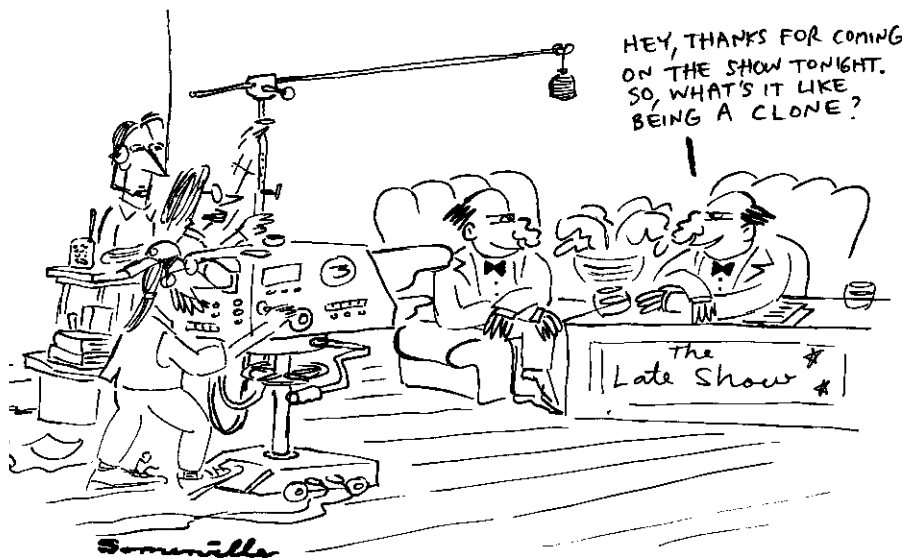
(See "Terminator Technology", NEXUS 6/01, Dec-Jan 1998-99; Global News, NEXUS 5/04, June-July 1998.)

No. 4: RADIOACTIVE METALS IN YOUR HOME

Under special government permits, "decontaminated" radioactive metal is being sold to manufacture everything from knives, forks and belt buckles to zippers, eyeglasses, dental fillings and IUDs. The Department of Energy (DOE), the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the radioactive metal processing industry are pushing for new regulations that would relax current standards and dispense with the need for special radioactive recycling licensing. By one estimate, the DOE disposed of 7,500 tons of these troublesome metals in 1996 alone. The new standards being sought would allow companies to recycle millions of tons of low-level radioactive metal a year, while raising the acceptable levels of millirems (the unit of measure that estimates the damage radiation does to human tissue). By the NRC's own estimate, the proposed standards could cause 100,000 cancer fatalities in the United States alone.

While the DOE waits for new standards to be released, "hot metal" is being marketed to other countries. Three major US oil companies, Texaco, Mobil and Phillips, shipped 5.5 million pounds of radioactive scrap metal to China in 1993. In June 1996, Chinese officials stopped a US shipment of 78 tons of radioactive scrap metal that exceeded China's safety limit, some by as much as thirtyfold. As of January 1998, 178 buildings in Taiwan containing 1,573 residential apartments had been identified as radioactive. Radioactive recycled metal has shown up in domestic markets as well.

(See Global News, NEXUS 5/03, April-May 1998.)



No. 5: US BIO-WEAPONS & UN SANCTIONS LINKED TO DEATHS OF HALF A MILLION IRAQI CHILDREN

For the past seven years, the United States has supported sanctions against Iraq that have taken the lives of more Iraqi citizens than did the Gulf War itself. The Iraqi people are being punished for their leader's reticence to comply fully with US-supported UN demands "to search every structure in Iraq for weapons of mass destruction". Ironically, 1994 US Senate findings uncovered evidence that US firms supplied at least some of the very biological material that the UN inspection teams are now seeking.

Although the United States defames the Iraqi Government for damaging the environment and ignoring UN Security Council resolutions, it has itself engaged in covert wars in defiance of the World Court, and left behind a swath of ecological disasters in its continuing geopolitical crusade.

The US demands are both excessive and hypocritical, says journalist Bill Blum ("Punishing Saddam or the Iraqis", *I.F.* magazine, March/April 1998). A 1994 US Senate panel report indicated that between 1985 and 1989, US firms supplied micro-organisms needed for the production of Iraq's chemical and biological warfare program. The Senate panel wrote: "It was later learned that these micro-organisms exported by the United States were identical to those the United Nations inspectors found and removed from the Iraqi biological warfare program." Shipments included biological agents such as *E. coli* and those that cause anthrax and botulism. The shipments were cleared, even though it was known at the time that Iraq had already been using chemical and possibly biological weapons since the early 1980s.

The real significance of "Made in America" is not only that the US and its allies played a significant role in arming Iraq with weapons of mass destruction, but that those companies and politicians who were responsible for this lucrative but deadly policy were never held accountable.

(See Global News, NEXUS 5/03; "Gulf War Syndrome: Biological Black Magic", NEXUS 4/05, August-September 1997.)

No. 6: US NUCLEAR PROGRAM SUBVERTS UNITED NATIONS COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY

When scientists in India conducted a deep underground nuclear test on 11 May 1998, it was seen as a violation of the United Nations Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), even though that country did not sign the document.

But two months earlier, an underground test carried out by the United States went largely unnoticed by the American media. Code-named *Stagecoach*, the US experiment called for the detonation of a 227-pound nuclear bomb at the Department of Energy's Nevada Test Site which is co-managed by corporate superpowers Bechtel, Lockheed Martin and Johnson Controls. While perceived as a hostile act by many nations, US officials claim that since it was a "subcritical" test—meaning that no nuclear chain reaction was maintained—it was "fully consistent with the spirit and letter of the CTBT".

Some foreign leaders believe that *Stagecoach* was designed to test the effectiveness of US weapons in case they were ever needed again. The European Parliament issued an official warning to the US, declaring that further experiments

might prompt other nations to engage in full-scale testing. Some Chinese and Japanese officials also criticised the US, calling for America to stop "skirting its responsibility for arms reduction".

Underground experiments aren't the US Government's only method of subverting the Treaty, says *The Nation* (15 June 1998). In July 1993, Clinton introduced the Stockpile Stewardship Program (SSP) which is allotting US\$45 billion over the next 10 years to finance new research facilities. While the CTBT prohibits the "qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons", this program will fund the building of nuclear accelerators, giant X-ray machines and the largest glass laser in the world.

In defending the experiment to the Press, Russian officials pointed to the US test as proof that subcritical tests of nuclear weapons are permissible under the CTBT.

There are no signs that either country will change its policy on subcritical nuclear testing. Nor does the DOE appear ready to end other activities in the Stockpile Stewardship Program that violate the principles and goals of the CTBT.

No. 7: GENE TECHNOLOGY LINK TO NEW DISEASES

All the signs are pointing toward a major crisis in public health as both emergent and recurring diseases reach new heights of antibiotic resistance. At least 30 new diseases have emerged over the past 20 years, and familiar infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, cholera and malaria are returning with vigour. By 1990, nearly every common bacterial species had developed some degree of resistance to drug treatment, many to multiple antibiotics.

A major contributing factor, in addition to antibiotic overuse, just might be the transfer of genes between unrelated species of animals and plants which takes place with genetic engineering, according to *Third World Resurgence* (no. 92, "Sowing Diseases, New and Old", by Mae-Wan Ho & Terje Traavik). Worse yet, regulators are considering a further relaxation of the already lax safety rules regarding this unpredictable and inherently hazardous field.

The technology of genetic engineering, also called biotechnology, uses manipulation, replication and transference techniques to insert genes "horizontally", to connect species which otherwise cannot interbreed. Normal genetic barriers and defence mechanisms, which degrade or inactivate foreign genes that they recognise as dangerous to the self, are in this way broken down. Used to facilitate horizontal gene transfer, genetic engineering can also result in antibiotic-resistant genes which can inadvertently spread and recombine to generate new drug- and antibiotic-resistant pathogens. This, say the authors, has occurred.

Horizontal gene transfer and subsequent genetic recombination may have been responsible for bacterial strains which caused a 1992 cholera outbreak in India, and for a *Streptococcus* epidemic in Tayside in 1993. Antibiotic-resistant genes spread readily between human beings, and genes from bacteria inhabiting the gut of farm animals spread easily to human beings. Antibiotics can create the very conditions that facilitate the spread of antibiotic resistance because they can increase the frequency of horizontal gene transfer 10-fold to 10,000-fold.

Biotechnology firms have billions of dollars invested in these new technologies and are concerned that their speculation bubble

may burst, due to public outrage, before they can recoup their investments. Not surprisingly, then, there is currently no independent investigation into the relationship between genetic engineering and the emergent and recurrent diseases.

No. 8: CATHOLIC HOSPITAL MERGERS THREATEN WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Nationwide hospital mergers with Roman Catholic Church medical facilities are threatening women's access to abortions, sterilisation, birth control, *in vitro* fertilisation, foetal tissue experimentation and assisted suicide. In 1996, over 600 hospitals merged with Catholic institutions in 19 states. The merged partnerships extend from Portland, Maine, to Oakland, California, and these mergers and partnerships with hospitals and health maintenance organisations (HMOs) are resulting in the impairment of reproductive health care rights across the nation.

Christine Dinsmore, writing in *Ms.* magazine (July/August 1998) gives the example of Kingston Hospital in Rhinebeck, NY. Kingston once performed about 100 abortions each year, but if merged with Benedictine Hospital, a Catholic facility, it will provide the service for medical reasons only. No hospital in the community would provide birth control counselling or family planning services.

Collaborations between secular and Catholic hospitals have made the Roman Catholic Church the largest private health care provider in the nation. Why would they want to join forces with secular hospitals? "The big money in the hospital comes when you have a closed system of doctors, HMOs and hospitals all feeding each other in a closed loop," writes Dinsmore.

Though activists object to partnerships between religious and secular hospitals that result in the ban of reproductive services, they are

sometimes willing to accept lesser collaborations, such as joint ventures or affiliations in which it's more likely religious directives won't be imposed. In response to community pressure, some health care agreements have resulted in independently run women's health clinics. Some activists, however, say it's a lousy solution because separate women's health clinics are often easier targets for anti-abortion extremists.

No. 9: US TAXES SUPPORT DEATH SQUADS IN CHIAPAS, MEXICO

On 22 December 1997, in the village of Acteal in the highlands of the Mexican state of Chiapas, 45 local men, women and children were shot as they were praying. Their bodies were dumped into a ravine. Elsewhere throughout the state of Chiapas, unarmed women faced down armies "with fists held high in rebellion and babies slung from their shoulder". In Jalisco, more than a dozen young men were kidnapped and tortured. One of them, Salvador Jimenez Lopez, drowned in his own blood when his tongue was cut out. Members of the group responsible for these and other atrocities are allegedly members of the Mexican Army Airborne Special Forces Group (GAFE)—a paramilitary unit trained by US Army Special Forces.

Mexican soldiers are being trained with US tax dollars to fight an alleged War on Drugs, but peasant activists say the real motive driving the US-supported war is the protection of foreign invest-

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ment rights in Mexico. "In Chiapas, US tax money pays for weapons and military...to destroy a movement for social justice..." The United States transfers aid to the Mexican military in cash, weapons and counterinsurgency training. The 1998 Clinton Administration budget earmarked more than \$21 million for the Mexican Drug War, including \$12 million for Pentagon training in "procedures for fighting drug traffic". Anti-drug effort seems to continue to focus on the Chiapas region where 80 per cent of the communities are in conflict zones.

According to the "Zapatismo Papers" (Darrin Wood), acts of inhumanity by GAFE were led by Lt Col Julian Guerrero Barrios, a 1981 graduate of the US-sponsored School of Americas (SOA).

Although it remains unknown how many of the 15 soldiers charged in the Acteal incident were trained at US bases, the Pentagon has admitted that some of the soldiers arrested were US-trained.

No. 10: NIGERIAN ECO-ACTIVISTS GUNNED DOWN ON CHEVRON OIL FACILITY

For three days in May 1998, 121 youths from 42 different communities had gathered to oppose the environmental destruction brought on by Chevron's oil extraction practices. For decades, the people of the Niger Delta have been protesting the destruction of their wetlands. Discharges into the creeks and waterways have left the region a dead land, resulting in the Niger Delta becoming one of the most heavily polluted regions in the world.

The students claim they had voiced their concerns many times and had scheduled a number of meetings with the company, but the meetings had been repeatedly cancelled by Chevron. As a next step, the students organised the protest around a Chevron barge in order to draw Chevron's attention to the goal of environmental justice. Student demonstrators had peacefully occupied an anchored barge in a protest since 25 May.

According to student leader Bola Oyinbo, approximately 20 of the 121 students surrounding the barge in small boats went on board to meet with a Nigerian naval officer who was working for Chevron. Oyinbo stated that the students wanted to speak to Mr Kirkland, Chevron's managing director. Although the director never came, other Chevron officials did arrive the next day and promised to set up a meeting with the students at the end of May. The students agreed to leave the barge on 28 May in order to attend the proposed meeting. On 28 May 1998, Nigerian National soldiers were helicoptered by Chevron employees to the Chevron-owned oil facility off the coast of Nigeria, where, after an onslaught of attacks, two students were killed and several others wounded.

No. 11: PRIVATE PRISONS BECOME BIG BUSINESS

Private prisons are one of the fastest growing sectors of the prison industrial complex. Under contract by the government to run prisons, and paid a fixed sum per prisoner, corporate firms operate as cheaply and efficiently as possible to ensure a profit. This means lower wages for staff, no unions and fewer services for prisoners. Substandard diets, extreme overcrowding and abuses by poorly trained personnel have all been documented as practices of this private business approach to incarceration.

(See "The Prison Industrial Complex and the Global Economy", this issue, NEXUS 6/04.)

No. 12: MILLIONS GIVEN CONTAMINATED POLIO VACCINE BETWEEN 1955 AND 1963

The once hailed "miracle" vaccine against polio was contaminated by a virus called simian virus 40 (SV40) between the years of 1955 and 1963. The virus hid in the renal cells of the monkeys which were used to make the vaccine. SV40 has been linked to rare, incurable cancers such as ependymomas (brain tumours), mesotheliomas (pleural tumours, usually of the lung), and osteosarcomas (bone malignancies).

(See "Vaccine Contamination" in NEXUS 5/04, June-July 1998; Global News 4/01, Dec-Jan 1996-97.)

No. 13: CHINA VIOLATES HUMAN RIGHTS IN TIBET

Throughout most of history, Tibetan women have enjoyed greater equality with men than have their Asian neighbours. Since China's invasion of Tibet in 1959, they have been at the forefront of the nonviolent struggle for independence, and nearly half of the protests staged over the last decade have been led by nuns. During that time, however, thousands of Tibetan women have been arrested, incarcerated, sexually abused, tortured and publicly executed.

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No. 14: POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS COMPROMISE AMERICAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM

America's justice system is being compromised by campaign contributions to judges from special interest groups and corporate political action committees (PACs).

No. 15: SWAT TEAMS REPLACE CIVILIAN POLICE AND TARGET MINORITY COMMUNITIES

In the 25 years since the creation of the first Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams in Los Angeles, police forces across the United States have become increasingly militarised. Paramilitary police teams originally only operated in urban areas, but in recent years the number of special task forces throughout the country, including with rural police departments, has dramatically increased.

No. 16: MERCENARY ARMIES IN SERVICE TO GLOBAL CORPORATIONS

In many countries, multinational corporations have paid directly for private policing services from the local army, or have hired outside security companies to harass nationals who protest against the environmental impact of their operations. The firms involved represent a growing number of new corporate security operations around the world, linking former intelligence officers, standing armies and local death squads.

No. 17: US MEDIA PROMOTES BIASED COVERAGE ON BOSNIA

A visit to the camps of Omarska and Trnopolje by a British team from Independent Television (ITN) on 5 August 1992 gave rise to the image of the Serbs as the new Nazis of the Balkans. A widely published photo taken by ITN pictured an emaciated Muslim behind barbed wire with comrades imprisoned behind him. However, ITN's photo was not as accurate as it seemed. The men in the photo were not standing behind barbed wire. In fact, the Hague Tribunal confirmed that there was no barbed wire surrounding the Belesn 92 at Trnopolje. The emaci-

ated Muslim shown without his shirt was actually a very ill man selected to be featured in the photo. Trnopolje was not a concentration camp: it was a refugee and transit centre. Many Muslims travelled there for protection and could leave at will.

No. 18: MANHATTAN PROJECT COVERED UP EFFECTS OF FLUORIDE TOXICITY

Recently declassified government documents have shed new light on the decades-old debate over the fluoridation of drinking water, and have added to a growing body of scientific evidence concerning the health effects of fluoride. Much of the original evidence about fluoride, which suggested it was safe for human consumption in low doses, was actually generated by Manhattan Project scientists in the 1940s. New evidence shows that researchers were ordered to cover up evidence of the dangers of fluoride and its levels of toxicity, to avoid lawsuit by exposed civilians.

(See "Toxic Secrets: Fluoride & the A-Bomb Program", NEXUS 5/03, April-May 1998.)

No. 19: CLINTON ADMINISTRATION LOBBIED FOR RETAINING TOXIC CHEMICALS IN TOYS

The Clinton Administration and the Commerce Department have lobbied on behalf of US toy and chemical manufacturers against proposed new European Union restrictions which would prevent children's exposure to toxic chemicals released by polyvinyl chloride (PVC) toys such as teething rings.

No. 20: DEVELOPERS BUILD ON FLOODPLAINS AT TAXPAYER EXPENSE

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), some 10 million people in the US currently live on floodplains, and developers are rapidly building more homes in these areas. Of these households at risk of flooding, only one quarter actually carries insurance; the rest will rely on federal disaster relief funds if their homes are flooded. Many of these homes face repeated flooding.

No. 21: GLOBAL OIL RESERVES ALARMINGLY OVERESTIMATED

Colin J. Campbell and Jean H. Laherrere, two independent oil-industry consultants, predict that global production of conventional oil will start to decline within the next 10 years, and will be unable to keep up with demand thereafter. Their analysis contradicts oil-industry reports which suggest we have another 50 years' worth of cheap oil to sustain us. As the independent report points out, economic and political motives cause oil-producing companies and countries to publish the inflated figure, and this affects all of us.

No. 22: AMERICAN ACADEMIA AT RISK AS TENURED PROFESSORS VANISH

The bedrock of higher education, the tenured full-time faculty, has become an endangered species. According to the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the number of tenured full-time faculty positions is rapidly decreasing on college

campuses. Full-time faculty are being replaced by part-time faculty who are paid two-thirds what tenured professors earn and receive substandard benefits. At least 43 per cent of college instructors nationwide are now part-time faculty. The hiring of part-time lecturers increased by 266 per cent between 1979 and 1995.

No. 23: BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT VIOLATES SHOSHONE NATION'S LAND RIGHTS

A decades-old dispute with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has led the Western Shoshone tribe to take the conflict to an international level. The OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has asked the United States to "stay" all actions, pending further investigations. But, according to *News From Indian Country* (May 1998), the BLM has "not responded" to documents supporting Western Shoshone land rights.

No. 24: COCA-COLA FAILS TO KEEP ITS PET PLASTIC RECYCLING PLEDGE

In 1990, Coca-Cola made a promise to use its recycled plastic bottles in new production, as it has successfully done in Europe and numerous other countries. Eight years later, they have yet to follow through with that promise. This failure to act has kept the price of recycled PET bottles low in the marketplace and discouraged expanded PET recycling programs nationwide.

No. 25: ABC BROADCASTS SLANTED REPORT ON MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

On 7 and 8 May 1998, KGO-TV, an ABC affiliate in San Francisco, broadcast a two-part series attacking the international movement to prevent the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Mumia, a black activist, has been on death row in the state of Pennsylvania for 16 years for allegedly killing a Philadelphia police officer in 1981. KGO claimed to do an objective review of the case. The final broadcast presented a very one-sided story.

Editor's Note: Complete references for each of these stories can be obtained from Project Censored's website at <www.sonoma.edu/projectcensored>.

